

## President's Message

Jean Burns Slater

*"We cannot force someone to hear a message they are not ready to receive, but we must never underestimate the power of planting a seed." Monifah Carter*

Because AAUW members are advocates for women and girls, we must revitalize our advocacy during this uncertain time. We cannot be complacent. We cannot ignore what is going on around us. In this newsletter there are articles that will raise your awareness of current AAUW concerns and possible actions we can take to continue in our long-lasting and effective support for women and girls. *These are must reads to stay informed:*

AAUW California President's Message - page 7

Self-Care - page 8

Title IX update: Our Branch requested this information. Now it has gone Statewide! - page 9

Lobby Days - page 9

Where Your AAUW Funds Go - page 10

Gender Based Scholarships - page 11

Project 2025 Discussion: February 22 General Meeting

## January Events

- 2 11:30 p.m. Lunch Bunch: Thai Villa Nipomo
- 3 11:30 p.m. Daytime Page Turners: Susan Brazil's home
- 6 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting: Zoom
- 14 6:30 p.m. Night Readers: Joan Florence's home
- 15 12:30 p.m. Finessing Femmes Bridge: Mary Lou Allison's home
- 20 12:30 p.m. Let's Talk Travel: Greenhouse Coffee, A.G.
- 20 Newsletter Deadline
- 25 10:00 General Branch Meeting: Mesa Dunes Club House: Sophia Zekria

## January Birthdays

Jean Burns Slater

Marjorie Ott

Mary Matakovich

Joan Knowlton

Liz Wineman

## February Preview

- 3 6:30 pm Board Meeting: Zoom
- 6 11:30 am Lunch Bunch
- 7 11:30 am Daytime Page Turners
- 20 Newsletter Deadline
- 22 10 am: General Meeting: Mesa Dunes  
AAUW Priorities and Project 2025

*Kor Kitchen: An Afghan Success*

*January 25, Saturday 10:00 a.m.*

*Location: Mesa Dunes Mobile Home  
Park Club House*

*Topic: Guest Speaker Sophia Zekria  
See page 3 for details*

## JANUARY BOARD MEETING

The January Board meeting will be held on Monday, January 6 at 6:30 pm via Zoom. If you or your committee have an action item to place on the agenda forward it to Jean Burns Slater, [jbslater2006@gmail.com](mailto:jbslater2006@gmail.com) by January 3 for it to be considered at this meeting.

### *Holiday Gathering*

*December 16, Saturday*

Perfect weather, a beautiful home, delicious appetizers, salads and dessert, a hilarious gift exchange and Cal Poly Choir Caroling highlighted our annual Holiday gathering. Best of all, was the opportunity to sit and chat, laugh and listen to each other as we reconnected in a very personal way as members of our AAUW Branch. Thank you each for attending and sharing your stories and time during this festive season. Thank you, Linda Lidberg, for sharing your home.



## JANUARY 25 GENERAL MEETING at 10 A.M.

Mesa Dunes Mobile Home Park: Club House 765 Mesa View Dr., Arroyo Grande Top of the hill

**Guest Speaker:** SOPHIA ZEKRIA, an Afghanistan refugee relocated to San Luis Obispo. Learn about Sophia's life and her accomplishments as an entrepreneur. She started KOR Kitchen in San Luis Obispo. Learn first-hand about her efforts to assimilate into the United States.

Invite a friend or two. SLO AAUW members will also be in attendance.

An excerpt from Sophia's website follows:

"At KOR, we are more than just a restaurant - we are a testament to resilience, passion, and the enduring spirit of Afghan culture. Founded by Sophia Zekria, KOR is a culinary haven where traditional Afghan recipes come to life with modern flair.

Our journey began amidst the chaos of relocation from Afghanistan to the United States, fueled by a deep love for our heritage and a desire to share it with the world. Through KOR, we aim to not only tantalize taste buds but also to shed light on the resilience and talent of Afghan women who continue to inspire hope in the face of adversity.

From the fragrant spices of Qabuli pallow to the delicate sweetness of rice pudding, each dish tells a story of survival, perseverance, and the indomitable spirit of our people. Join us at KOR and experience the warmth of Afghan hospitality, one delicious bite at a time."

## BINGO SILENT AUCTION A SUCCESSFUL FUND RAISER

Very impressive work women!!

Gross Income

2024 \$8,398.31

2023 \$8,037.97

2022 \$7,657.93

2021 \$3,915 COVID affected this year

Our Bingo and Silent Auction were a success this year. We netted a bit more than in previous years. I hope that next year we can concentrate on getting donations from restaurants and wine tastings. These are items that typically get a lot of bids. Every year we think about how we can improve and get more income for our projects. Start thinking of establishments you frequent or know of that you think would donate to our Branch.

Again, thank you to all of those who tirelessly assisted before, during and after the event. You are essential to our success! Kathy Cohon Pam Zirion

## MEMBERSHIP

Hello everyone. Wishing all of you a new year blessed with peace and compassion.

Susan Brazil 209-747-6663.

## LUNCH BUNCH, JANUARY 2, THURSDAY @ 11:30 a.m.



Gardens of Avila December 5



Thai Villa January 2, 11:30 a.m.

We will start the New Year's Lunch Bunch at 11:30 on Thursday, January 2. That means you all need to behave over New Years so we can get together as a group in a coherent fashion. Here are the details:

- \*The restaurant is Thai Villa at 626 Tefft St. in Nipomo
- \* It is on the right just past CVS. Exit at Tefft St. from Hwy. 101
- \* RSVP to Carole Dempsey at [medipharmix@aol.com](mailto:medipharmix@aol.com)"

I soon hope to find some new restaurant. Suggestions are welcome.

Have a Merry and a Happy New Year Carole

## SPOTLIGHT ON MARY WEEKS

### Everything, Everywhere, All at Once: Advocating for People

In the mid-west near St. Louis a labor union leader father and a union organizer mother set the scene for a compassionate, legal minded, and responsible daughter, Mary. With an older sister, by thirteen years, Mary had the advantages of being an only child and having a spontaneous and adventurous sister as a role model. In "those days" a woman was either a nurse or teacher. Mary's sister chose nursing and after graduating from the university, rode across country to California on a motorcycle, settling in San Diego, where Mary often spent her summers.

Mary's interest turned to fashion merchandizing and design and began a career with Chicago's Marshall Field's Department Store as a model and buyer. She switched to an ad agency and became copy editor in St. Louis. She married, had two sons, moved to Indiana and taught in an art program at a private school. Next, she was found in Texas, making her own way, and broadening her university experience with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology. Her Masters of Arts was in Criminal Justice and she worked in corrections. She was a probation officer and organized a court supervision program for non-custodial parents when they visited with their children. She presented her successful program to the Texas State Attorney General's Office. Next, she was supporting homeless women and children in her advocacy work.

Mary learned from her parents how to make your own way, stand up to management, protect yourself and make demands for a blue-collar worker. She was a true advocate for women's rights and all people from the start!

But wait! She was traveling in Egypt with one of her sons and, at her dinner table, a gentleman approached her, spoke with confidence, and said "You must come to Alaska." Mary reordered her life and went to Alaska. She developed a deep relationship with Lou but spent two depressing years away from her family as communication was sketchy. Lou and Mary decided to move somewhere where Lou could still maintain his position as a Chief Financial Officer of a Native Corporation. They tossed around names of cities and landed on Reno Nevada. There Mary became involved with the CASA program, Court Appointed Special Advocate, for foster youth and Lou landed a position in National Judicial College in Reno. Mary developed her own LLC, Limited Liability Company, in supervision and exchange of youth with non-custodial parents

During their time between Alaska and Reno, they decided that they needed a vacation home and decided on California. After settling on the central coast, Mary continues her hobbies of travel, having visited all seven continents, water color and pastel art, reading as a passion, her dog Rocco, and volunteering. She describes her favorite activity as volunteering with people, especially in the Federal Prison system.

A continuing challenge is the losing of both of her adult sons to genetic heart conditions. She misses them constantly but she also has adopted the philosophy that one must find joy every day in one's life. This is what spurs a person on, finding daily joy.

And Mary Weeks gives us daily joy as a member of our Five Cities Pismo Beach AAUW Branch. Her joy is our joy.



Rocco the Wonder dog



## FRIENDSHIP OUTREACH

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to All!

As we celebrate time together with friends and family, we need to remember those who are hurting and in need of our support. Susan Gray's husband has recently been put on hospice, as

well as Shirley Holgate, a long-time member who was instrumental in raising our awareness of the importance of AVID at local high schools. Kathy Cohon, our fearless leader in Bingo and Silent Auction, was recently in the hospital and in need of our support and cheer. Plus, Wendy Robinson, who left our area a few years ago to be closer to her kids in Texas, has had a tough year, in and out of the hospital and now again in rehab. She can be reached at her old email address, [cwendywalk@aol.com](mailto:cwendywalk@aol.com). Pat Muhlethaler did us a great favor of allowing us to use her garage to store items for the Silent Auction, but also can use our kind thoughts.

On a happier note, Linda Lidberg had a wonderful visit with her great grandbaby, gifting her great talents at stitchery to commemorate the birth. Priscilla and Gaye recently attended a quilt retreat at the lovely Camp Ocean Pines campground, where the weather was perfect for walks along the bluff and admiring the sunsets. In addition, Gaye has been in the middle of a 2-year project to reconstruct her home's exterior and siding. Stop by for a visit to admire the work! Mary Jorstad is back from Minnesota for Thanksgiving and is very appreciative of our Central Coast's fine weather. Priscilla and Jim are traveling to check out the European Christmas Markets in Austria and Germany with family.

Whatever your holiday plans, remember to check in with fellow members to see if they need a ride to events or a bit of help and good cheer. Let Jean know of those who need help or a bit of cheering up this month as we approach the new year 2025. Priscilla Alquist,

## LET'S TALK TRAVEL

The travel group will kick off the new year with discussions of travel plans both near and far for 2025. Join us at the Greenhouse Coffee Company on Grand Avenue in Arroyo Grande on Monday, January 20 at 12:30 PM.



## TECH TREK

The Tech Trek process has begun. The middle school science, math, and technology teachers in the Lucia Mar Unified School District have been contacted and given the guidelines for nominating a young lady who would make a great candidate for this coming summer's Tech Trek camp at UCSB. They have until February 14th to get their nominations in and then the nominees will use the online CampDoc to complete their

registration. Interviews of the candidates that complete their application process will be interviewed in March. Camper selection will then take place and the girls selected will be presented to our membership meeting in April. The number of girls we send has still not been determined as we are awaiting allocation of spaces based on Branch volunteers.

Linda Lidberg Branch Tech Trek Coordinator

**We are still looking for a Tech Trek co-chair to learn the process and help select campers. Please respond to this very important request by contacting Linda Lidberg.**

## EAGER READERS

The following elementary schools in the Lucia Mar Unified School District will be notified of our Eager Reader program and asked if they would like to participate with a free book distribution for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students: Dana, Nipomo, and Grover Beach. Book distribution will occur in March. All branch members are invited to help with this student treasure hunt for a book to keep. It is a very rewarding activity and fun also. Photos from 2024.



## NOVEMBER TREASURER 2024-2025 REPORT

Fund-raising figures from Bingo/Silent Auction are reflected in article on page 3. A full Treasurer's report will appear in the February newsletter after final figures through December 2024 are calculated.



## MESSAGE FROM AAUW CALIFORNIA PRESIDENT

*Charmen Goehring, President, AAUW California, [statepresident@aauw-ca.org](mailto:statepresident@aauw-ca.org)*

Many of us are still mourning an election that was very mixed in its results. In almost all states where reproductive health was on the ballot, voters decided to leave reproductive choices between women and their doctors. However, the incoming administration has been sending mixed messages on the issue. Project 2025, which is a GOP blueprint for the next few years, if enacted, has further red flags for women, such as ending no-fault divorces. This could have the effect of robbing women of the opportunity to leave a violent marriage. Some of the rhetoric being heard across the country is disturbing ("Your body, MY choice," for example). For those of you who have been fighting for women's equality for decades, it must be very difficult to find hope.

Luckily, we have a strong network of women in AAUW who believe that we all deserve equity and opportunities. Michelle Obama once called on us to be "bright

lights” in this troubling world. So, I have been thinking about how we, as AAUW members, can be bright lights in our communities at this particular time.

Many people are scared and anxious about what the future holds. I have friends in the LGBTQ+ community who are renewing passports and making plans to leave if necessary. We can continue to show up for our friends and others in our neighborhoods by reaching out, joining forces, and continuing to fight for our mission of equity for all. We have many opportunities in AAUW California to get involved, from our School Board Project work to sending girls to Tech Trek to building coalitions with other local groups with similar goals. We will be looking at our Public Policy Priorities this year and revising as needed based on feedback from our members. We are also working on ways to strengthen the confidence of our young Tech Trek girls to help them find their voices. Your branch may have special local projects where you can shine your light as well.

As we head into the upcoming holiday season, one that centers light on each of the major holidays in December (Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa), take some time to learn a little about a celebration that is different from your own family tradition. You may research the miracle that happened at the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem that led to celebrating the eight days of Hanukkah. Or, learn more about the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Or, even just learn about how another country marks Christmas, such as the Norwegian tradition of lighting a candle every night from Christmas Eve to New Year’s Day. Whatever you do, enjoy the time of gathering with friends and family. And don’t forget to shine your bright light for AAUW and our incredibly important mission of equity.

## SELF CARE IS A POLITICAL ACT

Looking forward to the New Year

We would like to take this moment to wish you a happy holiday season and to extend our deepest gratitude for your hard work, passion, and commitment to advancing gender equity and improving the lives of women and girls.

With the looming post-election threat of an uptick in policies and enforcement actions that run counter to our core values, including the promise to advance Project 2025, many of you may be feeling a range of emotions, including exhaustion, anxiety, fear, and despair. Please take time during this holiday season to practice self-care--[as Audre Lorde teaches us, this is, indeed, a political act.](#)

Unplug if you have to, spend time with your loved ones, and recharge so that we can continue to work together to advance and protect the communities that we care about.

When you feel ready to take action, we are here to support you. We will have opportunities on the ground, including via Lobby Days and the School Board Project. We will have opportunities within our organization, including through solidifying and expanding our Public Policy



Priorities. And we will continue to build new opportunities, including through partnering with organizations and individuals that share our priorities. We are gathering resources, projects, and outlets that will streamline our collective efforts.

With this in mind, we wish you all the best. Warm wishes for a peaceful holiday and a resolute New Year.  
In Solidarity, Missy and Amy AAUW CA Public Policy Chairs

## **2024 REVISIONS TO TITLE IX: HOW THEY IMPACT AAUW VALUES AND PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES**

Kathi Harper, member of the Public Policy Committee and chair of the School Board Project will be presenting a meeting on TITLE IX to all California AAUW Branches. This is the presentation that she prepared for our local AAUW Branch and now will be presenting it throughout California. The meeting will be held on Thursday, January 9, 2025, from 3-4 pm. Register [HERE](#). In addition you can pull up her slide bank.

Title IX presentation registration: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMlde-tpz0oHNGszzoXKer8JhdhqTpckfA#/registration>

Thursday January 9, 2025 3:00-4:00pm Pacific

[Presentation on Biden Administration Revisions to Title IX - AAUW California](#)

## **LOBBY DAYS 2025 - SAVE THE DATE!**

**by Rhonda Skipper, Member AAUW California Public Policy Committee**

Get ready to advance legislation that makes a difference! This spring the AAUW California 2025 Lobby Days event will be held over two days: an in-person meeting day at the State Capitol on Tuesday, April 8 and a virtual meeting day over Zoom on Wednesday, April 9, 2025. We encourage all AAUW California members to participate in this opportunity for advocacy that is essential to achieve our legislative priorities!

Starting in January, the Public Policy Committee will evaluate new bills introduced in the state legislature which are aligned with our [Public Policy Priorities](#). In mid March, the committee will meet to select 30-35 bills to make up AAUW California's 2025 Legislative Agenda, including the top three bills that we will advance during Lobby Days. Training materials on these three bills will be posted on the state website by March 26, 2025, and a mandatory training webinar will be held on March 31, 2025 at 7:00pm.

**A registration form will arrive in your inbox in early January 2025. Please be sure to complete and return the form so that you get necessary updates about Lobby Days, including your team and meeting details.**

After you register, you will be assembled into teams of 3 or 4 AAUW members and matched with Assembly and Senate districts. For in-person meetings, each team will be scheduled to meet with at least 3 legislative offices while for Zoom meetings, each team will be scheduled to meet with 1 to 3 legislative offices. Regardless of whether you are in-person or online, each meeting will last for 15 to 30 minutes.

Because legislators have many commitments during the busy legislative season, most Lobby Days meetings will be held with legislative staffers and it is not always possible to schedule AAUW members with their own legislators. However, be assured that these meetings are always impactful: because teams will be representing AAUW California as a bill sponsor and/or supporter, legislative offices will consider these meetings to be as important as constituent meetings.

Lobby Days 2025 is scheduled to take place just before the legislature adjourns on April 10th for Spring Recess. AAUW members are encouraged to participate in-person on April 8, 2025, and directly advocate at the State Capitol as these in-person meetings are the most effective way to advance our priority legislation. Even though we know that being in-person is impactful, AAUW California is not able to pay for your travel to Lobby Day in Sacramento. For those who are not able to come to the Capitol, there will be an opportunity to meet with legislative offices virtually via Zoom on April 9, 2025.

We understand that travel incurs a cost, and we appreciate you considering the in-person option. If you can afford to take a road trip, consider carpooling with your fellow members, and if driving a long distance, sharing accommodations to make in-person Lobby Day a more budget friendly event.

NOTE In addition to our members, this year some of your Lobby Days teams will include college students who have been invited to join in via a college outreach pilot project. Through this project, we will be distributing Lobby Days event flyers to several colleges and universities from November to February. Increased college student participation will enable us to reach more legislative offices; however, most importantly, we hope that this introduction to AAUW will inspire advocacy-minded young people who share our values to join AAUW.

If you have participated in Lobby Days in the past, we would love to hear your feedback on what worked and what didn't. Please send your comments to [publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org](mailto:publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org).

**Lobby Days is a wonderful opportunity to meet with legislative offices and advance bills to promote gender equity and improve the lives of women and girls. We hope that you will join us in this important activity to promote our values.**

## **WHERE YOUR AAUW FUNDS GO**

### **AAUW 2024 FUND FELLOWS AND GRANT RECIPIENTS**

Thirty-one inspiring California fellow and grant recipients are studying in California this year and are available to share nuggets of their fascinating studies. Watch the short video introduction by each fellow and grant recipient and see what, and who, your AAUW Fund dollars support.

Learn about Immigration, Reproductive Healthcare, Gender, Race & Ethnicity, Inequality and Social Policy, Incarcerated women, kinship, and activism, and other topics.

[www.aauw-ca.org/aauw-2024-fund-fellows-and-grant-recipients/](http://www.aauw-ca.org/aauw-2024-fund-fellows-and-grant-recipients/)

# ARE GENDER-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS PROBLEMATIC? NOT FOR AAUW, BUT THE CURRENT LEGAL AND POLITICAL CLIMATE HAS MADE UNIVERSITIES WARY TO OFFER THEM.

by Missy Maceyko, Co-chair AAUW California Public Policy Committee

Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1972 bans sex-based discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal funding. An outgrowth of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which offers workplace protections on the basis of 'sex,' Title IX was created to address historical marginalization on the basis of sex/gender in education. In sum, Title IX was created to provide women with equal access and success in educational institutions, to redress the historical marginalization of women in educational settings relative to men.

The definition of what counts as sex-based discrimination has necessarily expanded over the years, eventually coming to protect everyday Americans from things like pregnancy discrimination and gender-stereotype discrimination (e.g. not getting a promotion because you are not performing in a way that aligns with the gender you are perceived to be). In 2024, the Biden Administration extended a 2020 Supreme Court decision about LGBTQ+ workplace discrimination to Title IX, providing protections to the LGBTQ+ community by acknowledging that LGBTQ+ discrimination is often the result of animus derived from gender stereotyping.

The spirit of Title IX is to protect those who have been historically marginalized on the basis of sex/gender. However, as part of the larger pushback against social justice and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), we have seen a sharp uptick in watchdog efforts and legal action around educational programs and scholarships focusing on fostering gender (and racial) equity. **Those bringing these lawsuits suggest that programs and scholarships that are explicitly for women violate Title IX** because they discriminate against men. For instance, between 2016 and 2022, Mark Perry, an emeritus professor at the University of Michigan's Flint campus and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, filed 410 Title IX complaints against universities that offer programs or awards for women, but not men.

Lawsuits like those brought by Mark Perry **lean in to the concept of equality**, the idea that fairness is giving everyone the exact same things. This is opposed to **leaning into the concept of equity**, where fairness is reaching equilibrium by giving some individuals and groups different protections and support to make sure that everyone has what they need to succeed. If one student scrapes their knee and you give everyone a band aid, this is equality. If one student scrapes their knee and you give only that student a band aid, this is equity. Leaning into equality work does not make sense when equity should be the target to redress an historical and/or current harm.

However, given the threats of legal action to DEI programs, and given the ongoing legal wrangling over rules and guidance about gender equity and gender equality under Title IX, many educational institutions are unsure about the legality of their gender equity programs and initiatives. Furthermore, the threat of legal action has had a chilling effect as institutions with shrinking budgets fear the cost and burden of ongoing legal challenges based on gender equality and equity efforts.

Scholarships that seek to target protected groups to overcome historical forms of marginalization have become a target in the larger attack against DEI, Title VII, and Title IX. If a college or university is wary of listing your AAUW scholarship, this might be why. AAUW does not receive federal funding under Title IX, so we can offer gender-specific scholarships and programs without this same fear.

## NEW YEAR GREETINGS TO OUR GENEROUS COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS!

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